

# UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

## Minutes

Tuesday, 5 March 2013  
Boardroom, London

### **Present**

#### **UK Statistics Authority**

Mr Andrew Dilnot (Chair)  
Professor David Rhind  
Professor Sir Adrian Smith  
Mr Richard Aldritt  
Dr Colette Bowe  
Mr Partha Dasgupta  
Dame Moira Gibb  
Dr David Levy  
Ms Jil Matheson  
Mr Glen Watson

### **Secretariat**

Mr Robert Bumpstead  
Mr Mervyn Stevens

### **Apologies**

None

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**2. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes, matters arising from the previous meetings**

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 February 2013 were agreed as a true and fair account.

3.2 The meeting noted that the Authority's statement of strategy had been published on the Authority's website on 14 February. The strategy statements for the Government Statistical Service (GSS) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) would be published shortly.

3.3 There were no other matters arising.

**4. Authority Chair's Report**

4.1 The Chair reported on his recent activities which included:

- i. a visit to Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency with the National Statistician;
- ii. a visit to the ONS Titchfield site, where he had reviewed progress with delivering improvements to the ONS website; and
- iii. meetings with Cabinet Office and HM Treasury officials.

4.2 The meeting noted that discussions with HM Treasury regarding the Authority's budget for future years were on-going.

**5. Reports from Authority Committee Chairs**

Office for National Statistics (ONS) Board

5.1 Professor Sir Adrian Smith reported on the meeting of the ONS Board held on 19 February 2013. The meeting had been pleased to note significant progress in delivering improvements to the ONS website, which had included the launch of new theme pages. The Board had approved the ONS strategy and had considered planning and priorities for the future. An update on the current and potential future budgetary positions had been received.

5.2 The Board had considered feedback from key stakeholders on the performance of ONS in 2012 and had received a report on a programme of National Statistics Quality Reviews. The meeting had also considered the divergence in crime trends between the Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime. It had been agreed that there would be a further ONS Board discussion about the audit of administrative data used to produce statistics.

5.3 The Board had considered the ONS response to the recommendations of the Administrative Data Task Force, including the role that ONS might take in the context of Administrative Data Research Centres (ADRCs). The Authority Board would consider its response to ADRCs later in the meeting.

**6. Report of Public Administration Select Committee [SA(13)10]**

- 6.1 The meeting welcomed the interest shown by Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) in the Authority's work and that the recent PASC report - *Public Trust in Government Statistics: A review of the operation of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* - acknowledged the importance of the Authority's work.
- 6.2 The meeting considered the issues in the PASC report and agreed that the Authority would make a response to the themes and recommendations made in the report.
- 6.3 The meeting was pleased to note that PASC shared the Authority's view that the current arrangements for pre-release access to official statistics were unsatisfactory and undermined public confidence in the statistical system. The Authority would continue to receive a report annually from the National Statistician which would: detail the extent of pre-release access in the official statistics system; report on current international practice; and provide a record of breaches of existing arrangements.

**7. Authority Governance [SA(13)11]**

- 7.1 The Chair introduced a paper which set out proposals for revisions to the governance of the UK Statistics Authority.
- 7.2 It was agreed that the Assessment Committee may determine whether sets of official statistics be designated National Statistics or not, and may approve Assessment Reports for publication subject to the agreement of the Authority Chair acting on behalf of the Board. The Assessment Committee may also initiate Assessment Reports and consider other assessment and scrutiny related work. It was also agreed that monitoring reports would be considered first by either the Assessment Committee or the Committee for Official Statistics depending on the particular issue, and, subject to decision by the Deputy Chair for the Official Statistics system.
- 7.3 The meeting also agreed to update all Terms of Reference to reflect the role of sub-committees in ensuring their work contributes to the Authority's strategic priorities.
- 7.4 The Chair confirmed that further meetings of the Non-Executives, similar to that held that morning, would be a regular feature of the Authority's arrangements.
- 7.5 The Authority approved unanimously the revised terms of reference for the Assessment Committee, the Committee for Official Statistics and the ONS Board, subject to agreed amendments. It was agreed that these Terms of Reference would be published on the Authority's website. The Authority also endorsed the process for handling issues raised with the Authority.
- 7.6 The meeting acknowledged that its members had collective responsibility to communicate and commend these governance arrangements to staff, stakeholders and other observers. It was agreed that the Executive members had a particular duty to ensure that these arrangements were implemented effectively over the next twelve months in the delivery of the Authority's agreed strategic priorities. These arrangements would be reviewed at the March 2014 meeting.

**8. Assessment and Monitoring: Past and Future [SA(13)12]**

- 8.1 Professor Rhind introduced a paper which was produced following discussions on Assessment and Monitoring within the Board and elsewhere in the Authority since summer

2012. The paper set out how this work had been carried out over the last five years and how this work might progress in the future.

- 8.2 The meeting agreed that the Assessment and Monitoring function had a critical role to play in the delivery of the Authority's agreed strategy. It was agreed that the Head of Assessment should advise on the priorities for this work on the basis of providing the maximum impact from resources in the furtherance of the Authority's strategic objectives.

## **9. Assessment Reports for Approval [SA(13)13]**

- 9.1 Mr Alldritt introduced a paper which provided a summary of current and planned assessment activity. The Authority noted progress and approved the National Statistics designation for statistics covered by five Assessment Reports.

## **10. Draft Assessment Report: The Retail Prices Index [SA(13)14]**

- 10.1 Mr Alldritt introduced the draft Assessment Report on the Retail Prices Index (RPI). At its meeting on 9 January the Authority had agreed that, in the light of the National Statistician's work programme and the methodological shortcomings now known to be associated with the RPI, these statistics should be reassessed immediately to determine whether or not they merited continuing designation as National Statistics.

- 10.2 In approving the Assessment Report for publication, subject to agreed amendments, and thereby confirming de-designation of the RPI and its derivatives as a National Statistics, the meeting noted that under Section 21(1) of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 the Authority had a statutory obligation to continue to publish the RPI every month. The cancellation of the National Statistics designation for the RPI did not affect the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) and it was agreed that ONS should ensure that the differing statuses of these indices was made explicitly clear when they were next published on 19 March.

- 10.3 It was also agreed that the Authority would publish before the next meeting the terms of reference for the review of the governance arrangements and structures supporting the production of price indices. The Authority had agreed at its meeting on 9 January that such a review should take place after the National Statistician's recommendations on the RPI had been implemented in March. The aim of this review would be to ensure that measures of inflation best meet user needs in the future.

## **11. Update on Monitoring [SA(13)15]**

- 11.1 Mr Alldritt introduced a paper which reported progress with monitoring reviews and related work. Ten monitoring reviews were currently in progress.

- 11.2 The meeting considered a draft of Statistical Expenditure Report (SER) 8: Regional statistics published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It was agreed that the Chair would write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government upon publication of the report and would request that DCLG publish a summary of the responses to its consultation on the proposal to cease publication of these statistics. It was agreed that the meeting of 21 March would consider a draft of this letter prior to the publication of the SER on the Authority's website.

- 11.3 Ms Matheson advised the meeting that the GSS would be publishing a statement on its commitment to continue to produce regional statistics, subject to available resources.

11.4 The meeting considered a revised programme for future monitoring reviews and agreed that the meeting of the Assessment Committee on 21 March would agree the priorities for these on the basis of advice from the Head of Assessment. The priorities would need to be determined on the basis of providing the maximum impact with optimum resources. The revised programme would then be published on the Authority's website.

**12. Statistics to Inform the Scottish Referendum [SA(13)16]**

12.1 The meeting noted a paper which had been considered by the Committee for Official Statistics on 24 January which provided a summary of current work regarding the provision of official statistics to inform the debate around the referendum on Scottish independence.

**13. Draft Outline Monitoring Review: Comparability of Statistics Across the Four Nations [SA(13)17]**

13.1 The meeting considered and endorsed further work on an outline of a monitoring review which would focus on giving and explaining advice about making comparisons between official statistics for Scotland and other administrations in the UK.

**14. Proposals for Administrative Data Research Centres [SA(13)18]**

14.1 The meeting noted a paper which had been considered by the ONS Board at its meeting on 19 February which set out proposals for the ONS response to the recommendations of the Administrative Data Task Force.

14.2 The Authority endorsed the ONS Board position that there was a role for ONS to play in the context of Administrative Data Research Centres (ADRCs), and noted that discussions with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) would be held with a view to establishing a strategic partnership. The ONS and Authority Boards would be provided with a report on the outcome of the discussions with ESRC. Legal advice on the constitutional and governance issues, together with a full cost assessment of the possible organisation models would also be provided for the ONS and Authority Boards in due course.

**15. Progress with Improving ONS Statistical releases [SA(13)19]**

15.1 Mr Watson introduced a paper which provided an update for the Authority Board on recent ONS progress in improving statistical commentary and presentation, across their range of statistical products.

15.2 In welcoming significant progress in the improvement of some statistical outputs particularly in terms of commentary and infographics, the meeting nevertheless agreed that further work needed to be done on some key ONS statistical releases and across the range of GSS outputs more generally. It was agreed that Mr Watson would identify opportunities for members of the Authority to further engage with ONS statistical producers to support this on-going initiative. A further update would come to the Authority Board in July and then in the late autumn.

**16. Results of the 2012 People Survey [SA(13)20]**

16.1 The meeting noted a paper which presented the 2012 People Survey results for the UK Statistics Authority' including the main business areas outside of ONS.

**17. Any other business**

17.1 It was agreed that the Authority should review periodically the forward agenda for its meetings.

17.2 There was no other business.

## UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

### *Agenda*

**Tuesday, 5 March 2013**

**Board Room, Drummond Gate, London, 10:30 - 14:30**

**Chair: Mr Andrew Dilnot**

**Apologies: None**

1	Minutes and matters arising from previous meetings Declarations of interest	Meeting of 070213
2	Authority Chair's Report	Oral report Mr Andrew Dilnot
3	Reports from Authority Committee Chairs: • ONS Board	Oral reports Professor Sir Adrian Smith
4	Report of PASC: • Public Trust in Government Statistics: A review of the operation of the Statistics Act	SA(13)10 Mr Andrew Dilnot
5	Authority Governance	SA(13)11 Secretariat
6	Assessment and Monitoring: Past and Future	SA(13)12 Professor David Rhind
7	Assessment Reports for Approval	SA(13)13
8	• Assessment Report: Retail Price Index (RPI)	SA(13)14 Mr Richard Alldritt
9	Update on Monitoring	SA(13)15 Mr Richard Alldritt
10	Statistics to Inform the Scottish Referendum	SA(13)16 Secretariat
11	Draft Outline Monitoring Review: Comparability of Statistics Across the Four Nations	SA(13)17 Mr Richard Alldritt
12	Proposals for Administrative Data Research Centres	SA(13)18 Mr Andrew Dilnot
13	Progress with Improving ONS Statistical Releases	SA(13)19 Mr Glen Watson
14	Results of the 2012 People Survey	SA(13)20 Secretariat

**Next Meeting: Thursday, 9 May 2013, London, 12:00 – 16:00**



SA(13)10 – Public Administration Select Committee

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(13)10

***Public Administration Select Committee***

The Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) report - Public Trust in Government Statistics: A review of the operation of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 can be found on the Parliament website.

To view see this report go to:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-administration-select-committee/Publications/>



SA(13)11 – Authority Governance

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(13)11

***Authority Governance***

Terms of reference for the boards and committees of the Authority are published at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/board-and-committees-documentation/index.html>



SA(13)12 – Assessment and Monitoring: Past and Future

3

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(13)12

***Assessment and Monitoring: Past and Future***

Terms of reference for the boards and committees of the Authority are published at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/board-and-committees-documentation/index.html>



SA(13)13 – Assessment Reports for Approval

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(13)13

4

***Assessment Reports for Approval***

Assessment Reports are published on the UK Statistics Authority website at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/index.html>



SA(13)14 – Assessment Report: Retail Price Index (RPI)

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(13)14

***Assessment Report: Retail Price Index (RPI)***

This document has been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

To see this document go to:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-246---the-retail-prices-index.pdf>



SA(13)15 – Update on Monitoring

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(13)15

***Update on Monitoring***

Monitoring Reports and Briefs are published on the UK Statistics Authority website at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-reviews/index.html>



SA(13)16 – Statistics to Inform the Scottish Referendum

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(13)16

***Statistics to Inform the Scottish Referendum***

This paper will be published under Committee for Official Statistics papers for February 2014 when the minutes of the meeting have been agreed at the following meeting in April 2014:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/board-and-committees-documentation/minutes-and-papers/index.html>



SA(13)17 – Draft Outline Monitoring Review: Comparability of Statistics  
Across the Four Nations

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(13)17

***Draft Outline Monitoring Review: Comparability of Statistics Across the  
Four Nations***

This Monitoring Review will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website in due course.

The document will be available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/index.html>



SA(13)18 – Proposals for Administrative Data Research Centres

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(13)18

***Proposals for Administrative Data Research Centres***

The report of the Administrative Data Taskforce can be found at:

<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/collaboration/collaborative-initiatives/Administrative-Data-Taskforce.aspx>



SA(13)19 – Improving ONS Statistical Releases

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(13)19

***Improving ONS Statistical Releases***

ONS statistical releases are published at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html>



SA(13)20 – Results of the 2012 People Survey

**UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY**

SA(13)20

***Results of the 2012 People Survey***

The results of the 2012 People Survey will be published on the UK Statistics Authority website in due course.

The document will be available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/what-we-do/corporate-information/other-corporate-information/index.html>